RCMP External Review Committee

Accessibility Plan:

Annual Progress Report 2024

Canada

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Background

The *Accessible Canada Act*, which aims to make Canada a barrier-free country by January 1, 2040, came into force in July 2019. In order to attain that goal, all Government of Canada (GC) organizations are required to proactively identify, remove and prevent barriers in the following seven (7) priority areas:

- employment;
- built environment (buildings and public spaces);
- information and communication technologies;
- communication, other than information and communication technologies;
- procurement of goods, services and facilities;
- design and delivery of programs and services; and,
- transportation (airlines, as well as rail, road and marine transportation providers that cross provincial or international borders).

To demonstrate their dedication to delivering on building a barrier-free country, the *Act* requires GC organizations to develop an Accessibility Plan and to issue regular progress reports describing the actions taken in the implementation of the Plan commitments, including how the organization took the received feedback into consideration.

These requirements help ensure that accessibility is an ongoing priority and that all GC organizations are continuously improving and implementing inclusive by design and working towards an end state accessible by default.

The RCMP External Review Committee 2024 Accessibility Progress Report

The following is RCMP External Review Committee's (ERC) second progress report against its 3-year implementation plan that provides an update on the efforts and advancements made towards fostering a diverse and inclusive environment that is accessible to all.

A. General

The ERC is a micro-organization with less than 50 full-time employees under the core public administration. As an independent administrative tribunal, the ERC contributes to fair and equitable labour relations and helps to reinforce accountability at all levels within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Other than the courts, the ERC is the only independent review mechanism available to RCMP members and management for serious labour relations matters. The ERC conducts impartial reviews of appeals of certain conduct decisions and measures imposed on RCMP members and of written decisions regarding harassment complaints filed prior to January 1, 2021. It also reviews appeals of revocations of appointments, discharges, demotions and ordered stoppages of pay and allowances. Case files dealing with these matters are referred to the ERC for review by the RCMP pursuant to sections 33 and 45.15 of the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act* and section 17 of the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Regulations*.

Feedback Mechanism

The *Accessible Canada Act* requires organizations to establish a departmental process for receiving and dealing with feedback regarding the implementation of the accessibility plan. The

ERC commits to regularly monitor and evaluate feedback to ensure that it is incorporated into its future plans, as warranted.

If you have any questions, feedback or suggestions, you can communicate with the ERC by:
- Sending an email to the attention of the Director General of Corporate Services at corporateandhrservices-servicesgenerauxetrh@erc-cee.gc.ca
- Telephone 613-998-2134
- Send your feedback by mail to:
  RCMP External Review Committee
  P.O. Box 1159, Station B,
  Ottawa, ON K1P 5R2

B. Priority Areas Identified by the *Accessible Canada Act*

1. *Employment*

In its 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan, the ERC identified the following barriers:
- additional awareness and engagement are required to become a more accessible workplace;
- managers may not understand how to support persons with disabilities; and,
- employees are often reluctant to self-identify with disability.

As part of our ongoing commitment to engage staff and receive feedback, the ERC conducted an anonymous all staff survey in the spring of 2024. The survey results identified employment as the most important area for improvement for the ERC. Although the ERC is a micro-organization with a small number of positions and consequently a limited number of staffing actions, we continue to work towards ensuring that all staffing processes are accessible to all by examining essential criteria and assessments to ensure they present no barriers to potential candidates. Additionally, we ensure that all processes clearly outline candidates' accessibility rights and we accept requests for accommodations at all stages of the assessment process.

We continue to raise awareness with our employees through mandatory training and information sessions and by promoting inclusive events and tools. The ERC has worked to build a safe and accepting environment and the results of our internal survey show that we are making good progress. Specifically, the results indicated that 100% of employees agreed (strongly and somewhat) that the ERC is a safe place to work. The majority of staff also indicated that they feel the ERC is strongly committed to meeting the needs of employees with disabilities and that the ERC will support them if they require an accommodation.

Furthermore, 82% of staff indicated that managers at the ERC were able to create an environment where they are comfortable discussing mental health with their peers, managers and in team meetings with 30% of employees replying that managers do a good job and 52% replying that managers do a very good job.

2. *Built Environment*

In 2024, the ERC continued to ensure that all offices were equipped with ergonomic equipment and that emergency procedures were updated and shared with all staff as changes became necessary. The Occupational Health and Safety Committee continues to meet on a monthly

basis and ensure that the office is inspected every month. Due to the small size of the office, we are able to attest that the entire office space is inspected monthly.

In the feedback received from the spring 2024 survey, employees indicated frustration over the built environment not being big enough to allow for all employees to have assigned workstations which resulted in the need for employees to move materials to and from workstations when they are onsite. As per the 2022 [GC Space Allocation Standards](#), the ERC currently has the maximum amount of space allocated to quasi-judicial offices with 33 full-time employees. As a result we are not able to commit to assigning permanent work stations to every employee. To address this issue we have limited the number of employees assigned to share an office space and installed lockers for employee use so they are able to store items securely onsite.

We continue to offer a hybrid workplace with employees splitting time between the ERC offices in downtown Ottawa and a remote work location. As we require employees to work remotely part of the week, we continue to ensure that all employees have available to them the same standard of equipment that they have at the office. All employees were offered, and can request at any time:

- A sit/stand desk;
- An ergonomic chair;
- IT equipment (monitors, docking station, keyboard, mouse, etc.);
- Additional lighting;
- Fans;
- Office supplies (pens, paper, etc.);
- Secure storage for protected documents;
- Any additional materials they feel necessary to successfully complete their work.

3. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

ERC employees continue to work in a hybrid capacity with flexibility to work from the organization's physical office and remotely including access to GCcoworking sites. The ERC has successfully implemented its hybrid work model by providing employees with the required equipment that meets their accessibility needs.

The ERC has:
- continued to promote accessible technologies and software for its employees;
- considered accessibility and adaptability in all new software/hardware acquisitions;
- supported operations in being able to provide reports in alternate formats, upon request; and,
- provided access to assistive ICT as requested either through internal procurement or through the Government of Canada's assistive devices lending program.

4. Communications other than ICT

The ERC is committed to ensuring that all communications are accessible. To this end, the ERC has continued to ensure that it adheres to all Government of Canada style guidelines, including its directive on producing communications using plain language. In order to maintain accessibility, the ERC has adopted the Canada.ca website template and ensures that all content is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) updates as well as all Government of Canada accessibility guidelines.

5. *The Procurement of Goods and Services*

The ERC understands the importance of timely procurement of adaptive equipment and providing an accessible environment. Over the last year, the ERC has provided a rapid and simplified procurement process and has implemented a 10-day service standard in replying to all eligible requests for an adaptive or accessibility requirement. The spring 2024 survey results demonstrated that ERC employees feel supported by the organization in the event they need an accommodation (22% somewhat agreeing and 70% strongly agreeing).

6. *The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services*

The ERC is an administrative tribunal with a single program mandated to review appeal cases relating to labour relations within the RCMP and issue Findings and Recommendations (F&Rs). Its small size and sole responsibility limit the ERC's capacity to implement accessibility through program design.

In the last year, the ERC's Corporate Services Directorate (Corporate) has considered accessibility in the development and implementation of all policies and practices.

7. *Transportation*

This priority area under the *Accessible Canada Act* does not apply to the ERC.

C. Consultations

In order to receive staff feedback on barriers and the implementation of the ERC's Accessibility Plan, the ERC consulted with staff both formally and informally. Due to the ERC's size, it was not possible to consult solely and specifically with employees who identified as persons with disabilities while protecting their anonymity. Further to this limitation we also acknowledge that there may be several employees of the ERC who are not comfortable self-identifying and, therefore, we opted to consult with all employees through an anonymous survey.

For the anonymous survey, which had a response rate of 79%, the ERC specifically used survey programming that would be accessible for all participants and was conducted in the spring of 2024. The survey sought feedback on employee wellbeing, accessibility, diversity, inclusion, safety, management support, resources, and accommodations/accommodation requests. Informal consultations were held through all staff discussions to complement a more general and open dialogue regarding barriers and accessibility at the ERC.

D. Feedback

Since the publication of the ERC's Accessibility Plan, the ERC has not received any inquires or feedback using the feedback mechanism listed in section A of the ERC's Accessibility Plan and of this progress report. All feedback received to date was gathered through anonymous employee surveys, anonymous suggestions received through the ERC's suggestion box and through informal and formal conversations held between employees and management.

Feedback received in 2024 was very positive. Employees indicated that the ERC is a safe workplace where they can be open about a disability without the fear of judgment or

discrimination. They also highlighted the importance of the flexibility that hybrid work offers in terms of their work/life balance and the ERC's success in creating a respectful workplace environment.

One area of overall improvement identified from the feedback was employee familiarity with the ERC Accessibility Plan, with only 45% of employees indicating that they are familiar with the plan. To address this, the Accessibility Plan was resent to all ERC staff as well as presented and discussed during an all-staff meeting.

E. Glossary

Barrier

"means anything—including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice- that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation."

Disability

"means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment—or a functional limitation—whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society."

"**Nothing without us**"

"Nothing without us" is a guiding principle used across the Government of Canada to communicate the message that no policy should be decided by a representative without the full and direct participation of the members of the group affected by that policy.

Self-Identification Modernization Project

In September 2020, the Treasury Board Secretariat launched the Self-Identification (self-ID) Modernization Project to increase the accuracy, depth and breadth of the data across government. The project explored ways to reduce stigma associated with self-identification for all employment equity groups. Following extensive research and consultations, a new questionnaire was co-designed with employees from various diversity networks.